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Message Text

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ACTION EA-14

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 PM-07 H-03 INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00

NSC-07 PA-04 RSC-01 PRS-01 SP-03 SS-20 USIA-15 IO-14

DRC-01 /104 W
---------- 084166
R 111007Z JUL 74
FM AMEMBASSY SEOUL
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4812
INFO SECDEF WASHDC
AMEMBASSY TOKYO
CINCPAC

C O N F I D E N T I A L SEOUL 4514

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PFOR, KS, KN
SUBJECT: RETURN OF NORTH KOREAN BODY REFUSED

1. ON JULY 10 AT PANMUNJOM NORTH KOREAN JOINT DUTY OFFICER PASSED UNC/MAC JDO MESSAGE REJECTING UNC/MAC OFFER TO RETURN BODY DRESSED IN WHAT APPEARS TO BE NORTH KOREAN NAVAL OFFICER'S UNIFORM. NORTH KOREANS ALSO DENOUNCED OFFER, INFERRING IT WAS PROPAGANDA PLOY.

2. NORTH KOREAN REJECTION CAME IN RESPONSE UNC/MAC SECRETARY'S MESSAGE OF JULY 9, WHICH STATED THAT BODY WEARING UNIFORM AND RANK INSIGNA OF NORTH KOREAN NAVAL LIEUTENANT J.G. WAS RECOVERED FROM EAST SEA AT POINT APPROXIMATELY 35 MILES SOUTH OF RECENT POLICE BOAT INCIDENT AT 1700 HOURS, JULY 8. BODY CARRIED NO IDENTIFICATION. UNC/MAC SECRETARY'S MESSAGE PRESUMED, " THAT HE WAS LOST OVERBOARD FROM ONE OF THE NORTH'S VESSELS AND DRIFTED SOUTH TO THE AREA WHERE THE BODY WAS RETRIEVED."

3. UNC/MAC WENT ON TO STATE: "IN ORDER THAT THE REMAINS MAY BE RETURNED TO HIS FAMILY FOR PROPER BURIAL, OUR SIDE PROPOSES THAT OUR COMPONENT OF THE JO TEAM MEET
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YOUR COMPONENT OF THE JOT AT THE JOINT SECURITY AREA OR AT

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MILITARY DEMARCATION MARKER NO. 1291 AT 1400 HOURS,
11 JULY 1974, OR AT ANOTHER MEETING PLACE AT A TIME AND
DATE OF YOUR CONVENIENCE."

4. NORTH KOREAN SECRETARY'S JULY 10 RESPONSE READS AS
FOLLOWS: "REFERENCE IS MADE TO YOUR MESSAGE AT 1842
HOURS ON 9 JULY 1974.
NO MILITARY PERSON OF OUR NAVY IS MISSING IN THE EASTERN SEA.
ACCORDINGLY, THERE IS NO NEED OF HOLDING JOINT
OBSERVER TEAM MEETING. WE RESOLUTELY DENOUNCE YOUR SIDE
FOR ITS HAVEING COME OUT WITH SOME "DELIVERING OF A BODY"
AND ITS HARD PRESS MEDIA KICK-UP FUSS AS IF OUR PERSONNEL
HAD BEEN "KILLED" IN THE ENGAGEMENT WITH THE SOUTH KOREAN
PUPPET NAVAL CRAFT WHICH INTRUDED INTO OUR COASTAL WATER
IN THE EAST SEA ON JUN 28, 1974."

5. COMMENT: WE ARE BOTH WARY AND ANNOYED ABOUT THIS
EPISODE.

6. BEFORE INC/MAC REPRESENTATIVE HAD TIME TO CONSIDER
AND COORDINATE ACTION HE WOULD TAKE, ROK MINISTRY OF DEFENSE
ANNOUNCED TO PRESS DISCOVERY OF BODY AND SAID THAT UNC/MAC REP
WAS OFFERING TO RETURN IT TO NORTH. MOREOVER, SINCE THEN
ROKS HAVE GIVEN OFFER OF RETURN SUBSTANTIAL PRESS PLAY, OBVIOUSLY
TO MAKE POINT PUBLICALLY THAT IT IS HUMANITARIAN AND PREPARED
TO RETURN NORTH KOREAN DEAD, IN CONTRAST TO DPRK WHICH RE-
FUSES EVEN TO IDENTIFY FISHERMEN AND SAILORS KILLED OR
CAPTURED IN RECENT COASTAL INCIDENTS.

7. SELF-SERVING NATURE OF EXERCISE MAKES US WARY ABOUT
ITS AUTHENTICITY. WHILE WE ARE DOUBLE CHECKING, AT THIS
POINT WE HAVE NO EVIDENCE THAT EXERCISE WAS
HOKED-UP BY ROKS FOR PROPAGANDA PURPOSES, AND MND
OFFICIALS HAVE AFFIRMED THAT BODY IN UNIFORM IS AUTHENTIC.

8. OUR ANNOYANCE STEMS FROM THE FACT THAT BY GETTING
STORY OUT FIRST AND CONSULTING WITH US AFTERWARDS ROKS
FORCED UNC/MAC REP'S HAND IN MAKING OFFER TO RETURN BODY.
WHILE UNC/MAC SENIOR REP IN FACT AGREED TO DO THIS, HE
HAS SINCE MADE CLEAR TO MND HIS DISPLEASURE AT HAVING
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DECISION PREEMPTED IN THIS FASHION.
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